Researching Porn

Primary sources

Chicago area suburbs and the collar counties tend to compliment themselves on not having any porn or other visible vice. Prostitution tends to exist through outcall services for the hotels around O'Hare and bars in mafia dominated communities like Rosemont and Cicero. thus most of the publically visible stuff is left to Chicago.

Video/DVD

It's sometimes hard to find older items. Popular films on tape and tapes and DVDs are rented, worn out, used up, etc. Some larger rental stores have a "classics" section.

In Evanston, Video Adventure used to have porn, but didn't carry it on the shelves--you had to ask at the desk for a list of what they had and guess from the titles.

In Chicago, Nationwide Video at Belmont and Clark (843 W, Belmont; Belmont el stop) is a pretty good source for current het and gay hardcore in the basement. On the main floor they have a section of sexually oriented materials: some het and a good range of gay and lesbian independent films--dramatic, documentary, and other.

Nationwide has another store at 736 W. Irving Park, and an Adult Annex a block away from that at 3936 N. Clarendon (Irving/Broadway--3 long blocks east of Sheridan ed stop). The ground floor is soft core (e.g., Playboy videos) and a lot of gay dramatic features. The second floor has a large selection of gay and straight hardcore porn. (It also has a rather seedy upkeep and musty smell due to various leaking roof problems over the years.) This is probably the best single source for many current things. Late fees are very high.

Around the corner from the Nationwide Annex is a video store on Broadway (legit up front; porn in the back) that also has a large selection of straight and gay titles, including an erratic selection of older titles, and odd international items.

The Annex is at the north end of Boys Town, Chicago's gay neighborhood along Halsted from Diversey north to Irving Park. Most of the video stores have a fair selection of porn, gay and straight.

Specialty Video, 3221 N. Broadway and 5307 N. Clark has gay and straight porn and cult titles.

Run of the mill adult book and video stores can be found in the Yellow Pages phone book. For her research, Laura Kipnis used Frenchy's, 872 N. State street (24 hours).

A couple of places in Wicker Park have some unusual selections. Earwax Cafe, 1564 N. Milwaukee has healthy food on the menu and an unusual assortment of video titles in back. Quimby's (1854 W. North Ave) makes a point of collecting all kinds of weird and unusual subculture materials, including books, video, self-published work, etc.

Books/periodicals

A good source for books and periodicals, especially gay and lesbian titles, is Unabridged Books on Broadway, just north of Belmont. If you're not familiar with U.S. gay male

culture, check out the magazine rack which has an extensive selection for every taste. The large sections of gay and lesbian books include erotic titles, personal and autobiographical work, poetry, stories and novels, and nonfiction and are easy to browse since the staff often adds notes to the bookshelves reporting their recommendations. Behind the counter they have expensive photo and art books which you can browse by asking.

Women and Children First (5233 N. Clark) in Andersonville has a good selection of feminist work on sexuality, sexual images, and the sex wars debates. They used to carry some feminist videotapes including feminist porn...I don't know if they still do.

The best single source of academic books between Boston and Berkeley is the seminary Co-op bookstore at 5737 S. University Ave (just North of Rockefeller Chapel at the U of Chicago). The film book titles are extensive and almost everything in print is in stock. Excellent for feminist studies, cultural studies, art criticism and history, music (esp. Cultural and historical analysis of music)

The three Powell's bookstores in Chicago are used bookstores with good selections of serious and academic titles, esp. film, with an erratic selection of cultural studies.

a note on discussion in an international setting

Obviously, a lot of sexual language uses words and phrases not commonly taught in English classes. We're also often making assumptions and using references which take North America as the norm. I think we need to be sure we're defining or clarifying terms we use so everyone in the class has access to the discussion. For example, Carlos' mention of "bears" and "straight bears" was very useful, but might easily be opaque to non-native speakers, or people not familiar with North American gay culture. It's a two way street: if something isn't clear, we all need to be able to ask questions for clarification.